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HOUSEKEEPERS CHAT

Monday, April 15, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "More About Lamb." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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More news this morning for the home marketer. The Bureau of Home Economics says once more that lamb is a good seasonable meat buy at this time of year. Meat experts suggest especially a shoulder-lamb roast which you can have with the bones taken out and replaced with bread crumb stuffing seasoned with fresh mint leaves. There you have a roast that is tempting and easy to slice and not expensive.

The price of lamb is a little lower now than it was in the winter. This is the time of year when plenty of "fed lambs" are coming on the market from the Western States. "Fed lambs", as city people sometimes don't know, are now about 10 or 12 months old. They were born last spring on the western ranges, and since the late summer or fall have been fattened or "finished" in feed lots or sheds in the Middle West. They begin to appear on the local markets in December, and continue in abundant numbers until May 1, and occasionally later.

But there is lamb on the market all the year round. Early "spring lambs," born this year and fattened chiefly on their mothers' milk, are usually marketed when they are 3 to 5 months old. They usually sell at a premium price, and are most plentiful from May to July 1. Along in August to November come the "grass lambs," which have been feeding on grass. They are for the most part 5 to 8 months old. Next come the "feeders," in late winter and spring. There is relatively little mutton any more. Sheep growers market about ninety percent of their stock as lambs.

The big market for lamb is in the cities -- a very much bigger market than it used to be. Sheep first came to America in 1609 with the early settlers, who needed them to furnish wool for clothing. But as the population increased there developed a market for mutton and lamb. Later came the development of the West, and more and more sheep were raised on the great ranges beyond the Mississippi. Railroads were built, and the market for lamb and mutton became still wider as refrigeration made long distance shipments possible. Sheep-growers turned more to the mutton type of sheep and to cross breeding for stock that would be equally good for wool and for meat. Since 1900 the demand for lamb has grown so much that most producers now find it more profitable to market their lambs for meat than to hold them for the wool they would yield.

There are in this country something like 50,000,000 sheep on farms and ranges, and two-thirds of them in 10 States--Texas with the most, then Montana, Wyoming, California, Colorado, Oregon, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah and Ohio. But there are small flocks on farms almost everywhere in the Middle West and in the Eastern States, and in some parts of the South.

Every cut of lamb is tender, because the animal is so young. And either the breast or the shoulder, which are the cheaper cuts, make an attractive roast when stuffed. It is economy to buy a good-sized shoulder or a leg of lamb for roasting, however, say the specialists, because roast lamb is one of the best meats for slicing cold, and every left-over can be used in a spicy curry or any one of a dozen other appetizing hot dishes. Bones and trimmings removed before cooking make excellent soups and jellies.

For roast lamb, the directions differ some according to the kind of oven you have. The ordinary gas oven, where you can lower the heat quickly, should be hot to begin with -- 450 to 500 degrees Fahrenheit for the first half hour. When the roast begins to brown slightly, turn the gas down and finish cooking slowly at moderate temperature. But in an oil stove or coal range, or in a heavily insulated gas or electric oven, have the heat moderate--that is, about 350 degrees Fahrenheit--all the time the roast is there. The low heat cooks the meat through slowly and evenly, and keeps down shrinkage. Even the fat and drippings in the bottom of the roasting pan do not burn, but brown just enough to make good gravy.

But regardless of the oven and the temperature you use when roasting lamb, remember that, since lamb is a tender meat, it is best cooked in an uncovered pan without added water. Slip a rack under the roast to keep it from sticking to the bottom of the pan.

Certain relishes and certain vegetables seem to "belong with" lamb -- mint sauce, mint jelly, currant jelly, spiced conserves and pickles, or horseradish sauce for a relish, say, and onions, tomatoes, string beans, spinach or turnips among the low-cost vegetables. For salads served at the meal with lamb, you probably would want a tart dressing.

And then, say the specialists in lamb cookery, if you are serving lamb hot, have it piping hot, on piping hot plates. The fat hardens as soon as it begins to cool.

As I told you not long ago, if you want expert advice on cooking lamb, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., for the free leaflet called "Lamb As You Like It."

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